CURE
Connecticut United for Research Excellence, Inc.
The Center of Connecticut's BioScience Cluster

Bio
BIOTECHNOLOGY
INDUSTRY ORGANIZATION

Testimony of

Connecticut United for Research Excellence (CURE)

and the

Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO)

Hearing of the Joint Committee on Environment
February 22, 2012

Regarding Connecticut House Bill 5117:

"AN ACT CONCERNING GENETICALLY-ENGINEERED FOODS"

The Honorable Edward Meyer, Committee Co-Chair
The Honorable Richard Roy, Committee Co-Chair
And Members of the Joint Committee on Environment:

Chairman Meyer, Chairman Roy and Members of the Joint Committee on Environment, on behalf of the member companies of Connecticut United for Research Excellence (CURE) and the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO), please accept our statement in opposition to House Bill 5117.

BIO is a national trade organization, based in Washington, D.C., representing more than 1,100 biotechnology companies, academic institutions, state biotechnology centers, and related organizations across the United States and 31 other nations. BIO members are involved in the research and development of healthcare, agricultural, industrial and environmental biotechnology products. BIO represents virtually all of the biotech seed manufacturers in North America. In Connecticut, BIO works with the CURE, which is the educational and business support network organization for bioscience in the state. With over 100 members, CURE's mission is to build networks and critical mass for the industry within the state, to keep Connecticut competitive in bioscience, and to tell the Connecticut bioscience story.

We oppose House Bill 5117 as it is nothing more than a solution in search of a problem. Food labeling requirements should be and have always been science-based to give consumers meaningful information about the foods they buy and eat. U.S. law limits labeling requirements for food to situations where there is a scientifically valid and constitutionally reasonable rationale for protecting

the public; such as making nutrition information available to promote healthy food choices or warning about a common food allergen to protect susceptible populations.

Therefore, under current statutes and regulations of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), changes to foods require labeling only if the product has been significantly changed nutritionally or if there have been changes in other health-related characteristics of the food (allergenicity, toxicity, or composition). The FDA even provides an extensive website that is meant to "address the labeling requirements for foods under the Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act and its amendments". National labeling standards and explanations are readily available to all consumers at http://www.fda.gov/food/labelingnutrition/default.htm.

These same regulatory agencies currently provide clear guidelines for voluntary labels to aid consumers who make a personal decision not to consume food made from ingredients derived from biotechnology. The FDA provides specific guidelines and clear examples for producers on how to label foods that were not developed using biotechnology. The USDA runs the National Organic Program, a certification program which allows producers to label products as 'Certified Organic' if producers follow certain production standards. Thus, existing regulations already give food producers methods by which to provide consumers with helpful information and ample ability to choose not to purchase foods that have been genetically modified.

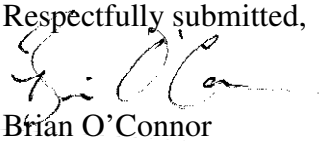
To require the labeling of foods that are indistinguishable from foods produced through traditional methods would mislead consumers by falsely implying differences where none exist. It also risks diverting attention from important safety and nutritional information. As previously mentioned, food companies have the right to voluntarily place claims on their products and often do so. However, federal law is very clear that the burden of truthfulness and non-misleading statements of the claim falls on the food company.

Furthermore, according to the 2010 Consumer Survey by the International Food Information Council (IFIC), consumer satisfaction with current information on food labels remains high. Only 18 percent of consumers supported additional info on food labels, with only three percent supporting the labeling of biotech foods. The majority of Americans support the current FDA labeling policy.

Finally, the labeling requirements in HB 5117 far exceed true customer education, and are designed to apply a misleading 'warning label' to foods that are a produced from a safe and thoroughly regulated process. BIO has and will continue to fully support the current laws and regulations administered by FDA and USDA that require food labeling to be truthful and not misleading.

We hope you will consider these points and the real impacts of HB 5117.

Respectfully submitted,



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